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# DECORATION & FURNITURE

## INTERIOR DECORATION.



So few people are disposed to give to architects all the credit that belongs to them for the advances which all admit have been made in interior decoration, because many good architects habitually turn out and impose on their patrons very ugly designs of ornamental detail. This leads us to question at the outset the dictum of Messrs. Brunner and Tryon in their recently published book, "Interior Decoration," where they say that "in defining architecture" they find that "it includes the sister arts." This principle is as pernicious in practice as it is illogical, and, if architects are allowed, and even forced, to govern themselves

by it, it is solely because of the scarcity of properly qualified decorators. But in all the business of laying out and proportioning spaces, and of pointing out those which are to receive decoration and which are to remain plain, the architect's word is properly law. Of this he must have made an exhaustive study, if he has studied his art as an art and not as a business, and it is because of our architects' proficiency in such work that we aver that they more than all others are to be thanked for the marked improvement which has come over American interiors within our memory. Mr. Brunner's book (published by Wm. T. Comstock), while not altogether avoiding the details of decoration, is mainly devoted to the consideration of what to do with large surfaces, and is concerned more with style and materials than with particular patterns; in other words, it keeps pretty closely to the proper province of the architect; and as it is full of sensible suggestions, we think we can do no better by its authors and our readers than to lay before the latter some of those hints, accompanied by a few illustrations from the book, which may serve as a sample, and no more than a sample, of the whole.

To begin at the beginning, our authors favor tiles, marble slabs, or mosaic, for both floor and walls of the vestibule, hinting that mosaic is much the most lasting as well as the most sightly, and that, in very simple patterns, it need cost but little more than tiles. They prefer a single door to the double door which is common. The hall they would have enlarged for a central room, with large, broadly treated fireplace, like that shown in our illustration, and stairs more or less screened from view by portières and Egyptian lattice-work. The use of Georgia pine in combination with bands or borders of cherry is recommended for floors and wainscot, and probably no better combination, for its cost, could be thought of. Our staircases have been completely changed for the better by architects in recent years. But our authors point out a few elementary principles of staircase construction which are not always borne in mind by modern decorative architects. The principal of these is that "winders," or steps that radiate from a corner, being dangerous, ought to be avoided. This is to be done by having turnings at right angles, with a landing, however small, at each turning. It is easy to see that this plan, besides its safety,

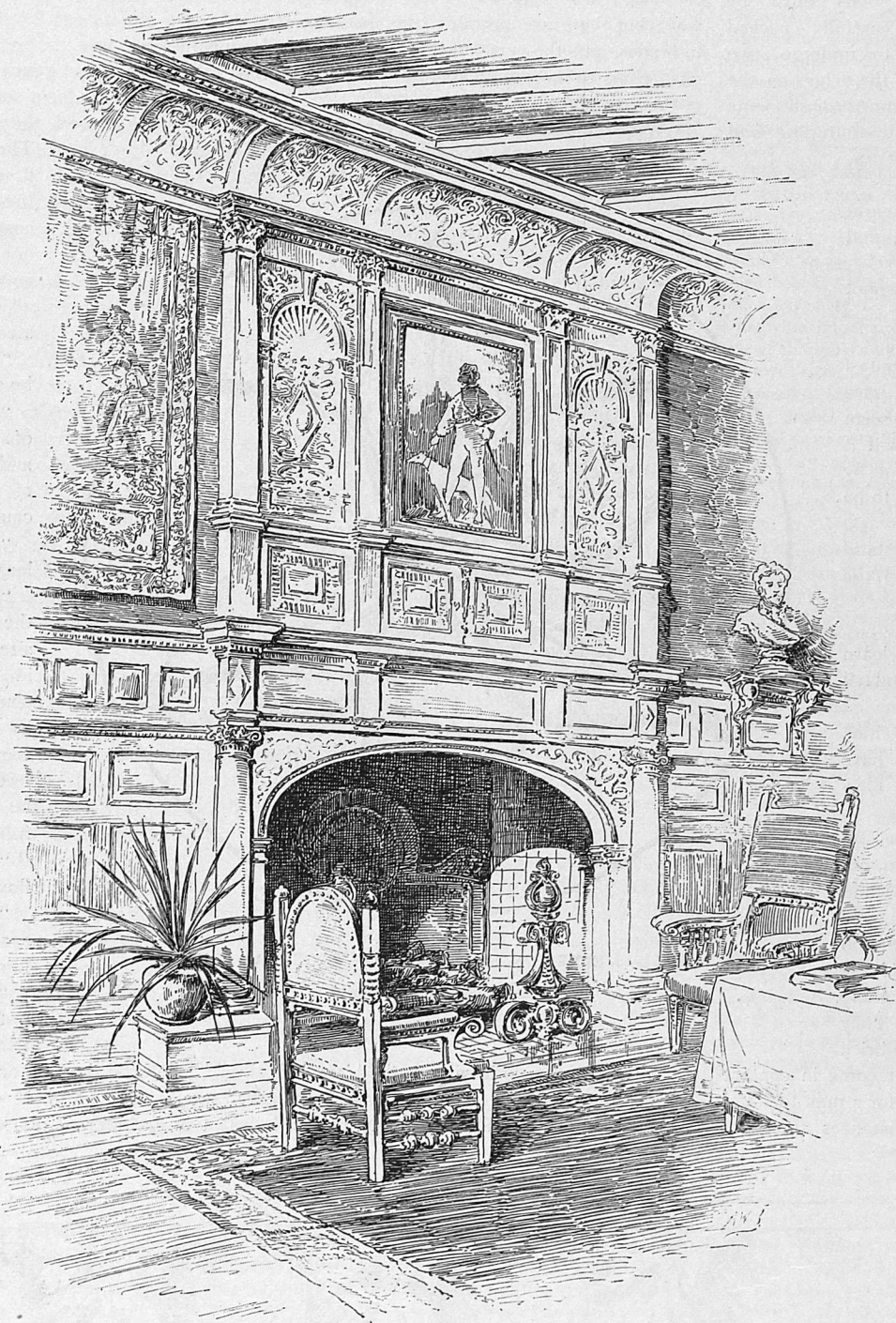
offers advantages in the way of decoration in the shape of ornamental newel-posts, like that shown in our initial S, which are not to be despised. The "nosing," or rounding the edge of a step, with a supporting moulding between, is another instance of an intimate union of beauty and convenience.

Not less practical are some of our authors' suggestions for the library. Bays are highly commended, and, as a substitute, deeply recessed window-seats. An open fireplace is rightly held to be a necessity; and as for the bookcases, "the best arrangement is to let them surround the room, making a sort of bibliographical dado, the height of which must be determined by the number of volumes to be encased." If the number be great, and the dado correspondingly high, the wall space above must be considered as a frieze, and the bookcases be architecturally treated. Curtains for most of the shelves, and small closed cases for costly books only are advised. Many small divisions, it is pointed out, are far more convenient than a few large ones. For the frieze, wood panelling, stamped leather, or paper of a quiet tone, may be used; and the ceiling may be all of wood, or with panels of stamped leather or modelled plaster. Bracket lights are recommended for use at night, in preference to a central chandelier, on the ground that they do not completely change the direction of shadows, and so do not impose the impossible task on the architect of designing a room for one

effect by daylight and an entirely different effect by night. In large rooms, and where pictures are hung on the walls, four small corner chandeliers may be preferable to either. Opalescent or cut-glass globes are advised for electric lights, if these are used.

There is much well worth reading in the chapter on the parlor, but, being in very general terms, it cannot usefully be quoted here. One point, though, may be mentioned. It is of the greatest importance in designing the color scheme of this or any other room to take into account the probable reflections from the outside. The green of a tree standing before a window in summer will make a red room dull and bricky, while reflections from a brick wall will turn a blue room into a dirty violet. If such reflections are not to be shut out, the prevailing tint of the room should be in harmony with them. The usual "tricks" for remedying the improper proportions of our city parlors are described, in connection with which we may consider the pretty screen which we illustrate and which is designed to divide a long parlor in two.

Mr. Brunner gives what he calls two treatments of a single design for a dining-room wall, the architectural treatment being very good, and the decorative treatment rather poor as well as more costly; but he is, on general principles, and very properly, opposed to heaviness in the dining-room. Lambrequins are denounced, leather papers praised, and old Turkish rugs of good quality recommended as a safe guide toward a proper scheme of color, which should mount from these to lighter tones. A concession is made to tradition in the matter of dining-room furniture, which it is allowed to have as massive as the scale of the rest of the woodwork will permit. The seats of the chairs should be a little higher than usual, and the backs more



LIBRARY OR DINING-ROOM OPEN FIREPLACE.

nearly vertical. Leather or close-woven tapestries are good for covering. Plush and velvet are to be avoided. A recessed fireplace, as shown in our illustration, is an excellent feature in a dining-room, as it will roast no one's back, but will be visible and sensible to all the guests.

The study, growlery, den, or whatever its owner chooses to call it, receives due at-



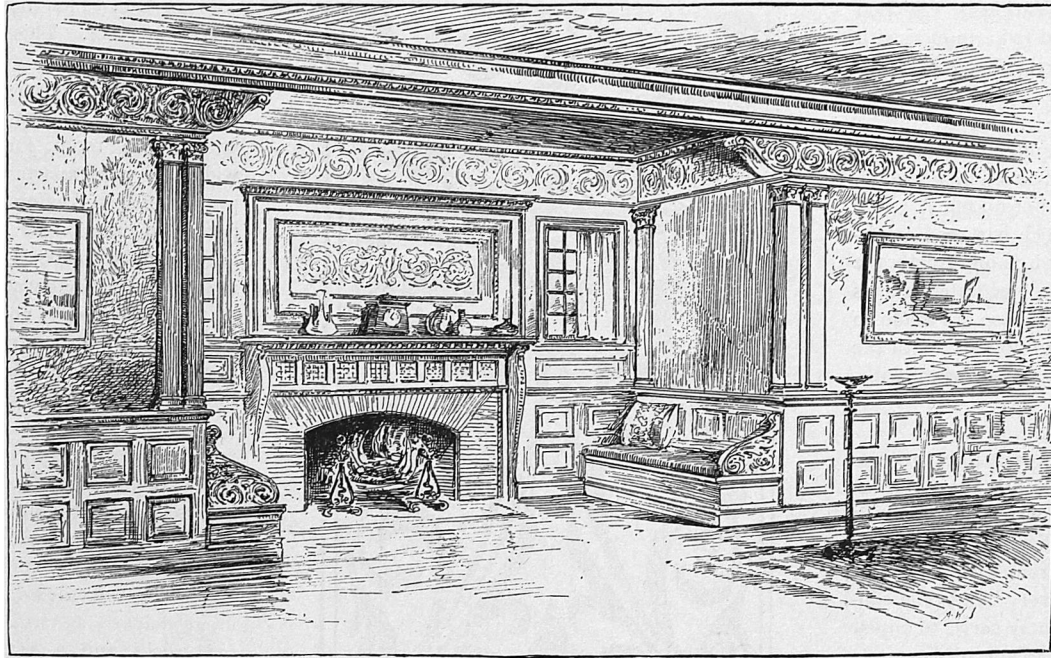
tention from Messrs. Brunner and Tryon, who overflow in suggestions as to its treatment. Corner fireplaces with Queen Anne cupboards, Turkish divans, and all manner of quaint ideas are hinted at in the text and displayed in the drawings. A den in a city residence made in exact imitation of the owner's log cabin in the West is a good example. The walls are of halved logs. The ceiling has a double pitch, and from the rafters hang skins and other spoils of the chase. Coffee sacking, India matting and the corrugated paper unwrapped from wine-bottles are suggested for decorative panels.

Lastly, our authors come to the bedrooms, where, following the doctors, they advise in favor of painted walls, rugs instead of carpets, and few hangings. Stippling or slightly roughening the paint is advised for the sake of richness of texture, and a delicately stencilled frieze may be added at little cost. Among the bedroom illustrations is one of a very pretty washstand, with a background of water-green tiles, with a few fishes darting here and there in a charmingly suggestive way.

THE writer in a New York journal who speaks of the "old carved oak English sideboards" at the rooms of a certain dealer in art objects, should know that they are not "old" and that they are not "English." Our dealers used to import such manufactured "antiques" almost entirely from Chester, where one, Sherritt, still turns them out with amazing celerity, including a liberal

## ARTISTIC FRAMING OF PICTURES.

"WHAT do you think should be the object of a picture-frame?" was the question put by a representative of The Art Amateur to a New York frame-maker noted for his good taste in the setting of paintings and prints.



DINING-ROOM WITH RECESSED MANTEL.

"Practically, to preserve the picture from injury; æsthetically, to separate it from surrounding objects, so that the eye and the mind can, for a time, be wholly given to it."

"Do you not believe, then, in decorating the frame with something having a direct reference to the subject of the picture, or helping to carry out its principal lines?"

To give an example which will fit both clauses of my question: suppose a picture of birds perched on a telegraph-wire, and on the flat frame of gilt wood two telegraph-poles carved, with their insulators and the wires attached. Do you not think that such a frame would be appropriate to such a picture?"

"Perhaps. It would depend upon the picture. If it were a good picture, the artist, I should think, would be furious at having it so treated. Even if a bad one, he would be mortified, and with reason!"

"How so?"

"Because the frame-maker would be commenting upon the picture in the most offensive manner. He would be adding to it—changing its composition."

"But surely the frame must have some effect upon the picture?"

"Undoubtedly. It should isolate the picture and thereby increase its effect."

"Nothing more?"

"No more. Every quality of a good frame, so far as it affects the eye, tends to that result."

"But I see here frames in white and gold; others fully gilt, others in wood of the natural colors; some flat, some bevelled, some straight-edged, some curved: are not these varieties meant to

harmonize with the picture and with the room into which it is to go?"

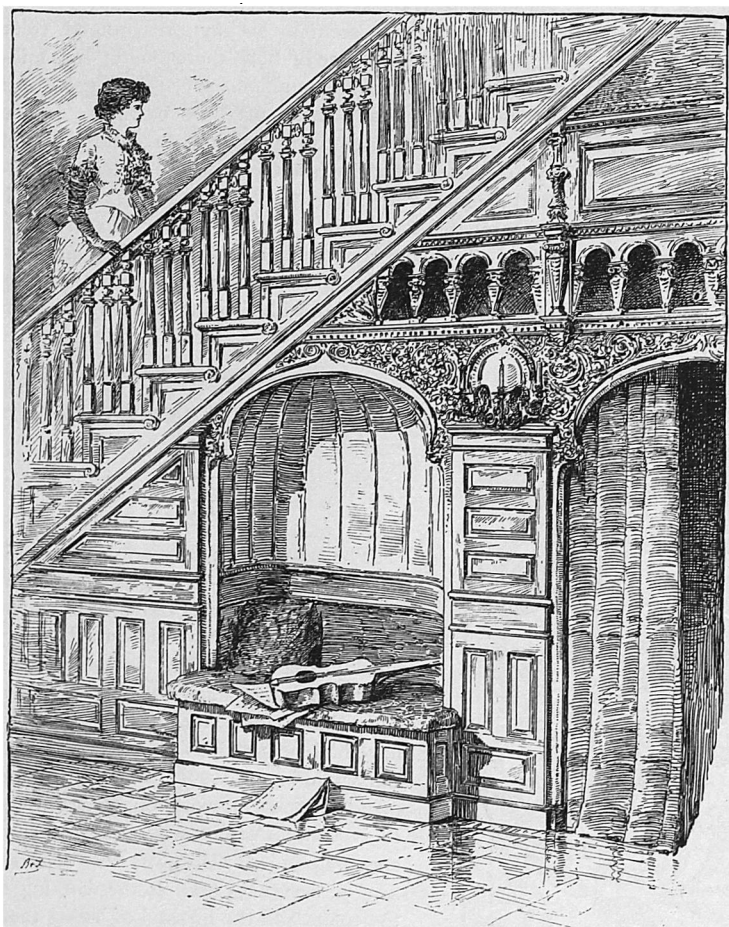
"Yes, to harmonize and, at the same time, to contrast with the picture and with the surroundings. The frame must do both, or else it cannot serve its purpose as a frame. I will explain."

"Many houses are being decorated just now, especially the parlors and drawing-rooms, in very light colors,

in white, or with white predominant. To introduce pictures into such rooms framed in dark wood, or even in heavy gilt frames, would be to draw attention to the frames rather than to the pictures. For the same reason, very dark pictures must be avoided in these rooms. Bright water-colors, etchings, photogravures, framed in white

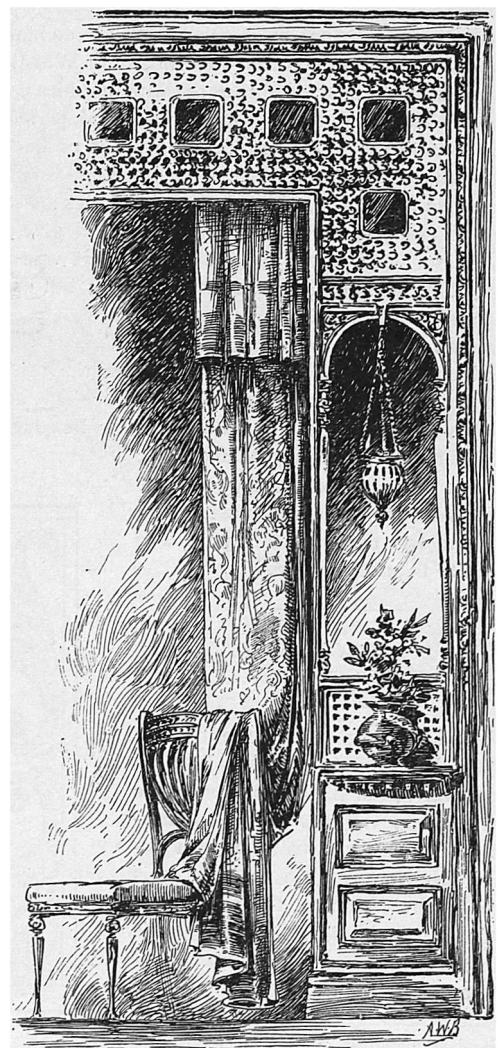
and gold, in the styles of Louis XV. and XVI., and the Directory, are appropriate. Then, for the library, let us say in terra-cotta color or light red, nothing can be much better than the majority of our modern etchings in antique or English oak, or bog oak, accordingly as the ink in which the etching is printed is light or dark brown, or black. We have made many experiments in framing these Braun carbon-types after the old masters, and have found that nothing has so good an effect as this simple, flat, elliptical moulding in rosewood, without any mat, gilding or ornament of any sort. On the other hand, for most oil-paintings and many water-colors, the fully gilt and richly decorated frame is the best.

"A picture strongly painted with a full palette can be relieved by gold only. Any color will be sure to interfere with some color in the picture. And, if the frame is very plain, it will contrast so strongly with the richly composed painting as to attract attention to itself, which it should not do. In the case of prints, a very light frame



TREATMENT OF HALL AND STAIRCASE IN A CITY HOUSE.

supply of worm-holes—made by firing buck-shot into the wood. But now several of them make them themselves in New York, using American instead of English oak, because it lasts better in this climate. As a general rule, the buyer may reasonably suspect—no matter what the salesman may tell him to the contrary—the genuineness of any elaborately carved sideboard offered to him on the representation that it is "an antique."



PORTION OF A SCREEN BETWEEN PARLOR AND DINING-ROOM.

to a very light picture will, in an ordinary room, have the effect of no frame at all. The whole will look like a large white spot. Similarly with a dark picture in a frame equally dark. Then, if conditions are changed, and a very dark picture is put in a very light frame, or